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ABSTRACT

From Erikson's (1968) psychosocial criteria of crisis and commitment, Marcia (1964) derived four ego identity statuses, i.e., achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. To explore antecedents of Erikson's ego identity construct, 130 college females completed a modified identity status interview, and questionnaires designed to elicit information about self-esteem, social desirability, and selected parent variables (e.g., acceptance, rejection, indulgence, approval). Hypotheses concerning the antecendent variables were derived from the theoretical formulations of Erikson (1968), Maslow (1970), and Coppersmith (1967). Analysis of results showed that only 2 of the 15 variables (paternal indulgence, and maternal nonenforcement of standards) failed to discriminate among identity statuses. In addition, the identity statuses could be significantly discriminated along two different dimensions. The first dimension, which accounted for about 68 percent of the variance, set achievers and foreclosures apart from moratoriums and diffusions. The second dimension, which accounted for about 26 percent of the variance, set achievers and moratoriums apart from foreclosures and diffusions. Although the sample did not broadly represent the adolescent population, the results suggest that Maslow's motivational hierarchy may be useful in determining the processes which underlie identity outcomes. The results also relate to the debate concerning which statuses are more stable or adaptive for women within particular social milieus. (Author/JAC)

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EGO IDENTITY STATUS: ADDRESSING THE CONTINUUM DEBATE

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Ego Identity Status: Addressing the Continuum Debate

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ABSTRACT

Antecedents of Erikson's (1968) ego identity construct were explored by interviewing 130 college females in Marcia's (1964) ego identity statuses and relating status assignment to self-esteem, selected parent variables and socially desirable responding. Hypotheses concerning these antecedent variables were largely derived from the theoretical formulations of Erikson (1968), Maslow (1970) and Coopersmith (1967). Results were analyzed by means of a discriminant function analysis which revealed that all but two of fifteen antecedent variables significantly interacted with identity status. In addition, the analysis revealed that the identity statuses could be significantly discriminated along two different dimensions. The first dimension, which accounted for about 68 per cent of the variance, set achievers and foreclosures apart from moratoriums and diffusions. The second dimension, which accounted for about 26 per cent of the variance, set achievers and moratoriums apart from foreclosures and diffusions. Although the sample does not broadly represent the adolescent population, results suggest that Maslow's motivational hierarchy may be useful in determining the processes which underlie identity outcomes. Results also relate to the debate concerning which statuses are more stable or adaptive for women within particular social milieus.

Ego Identity Status: Addressing the Continuum Debate

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Erikson's notion of ego identity has been highly influential in the study of adolescence. However, due to the diversity of meanings associated with this construct, investigators have experienced difficulty translating it into a scientifically researchable entity. Among the most productive empirical approaches to date has been Marcia's research on ego identity status. From Erikson's psychosocial criteria of crisis and commitment, Marcia logically derives four basic ego identity statuses, achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and diffusion.

The identity achiever is one who has carefully weighed alternative ideologies and roles and has acquired a personal set of commitments. The foreclosure status defines one who has made commitments in the absence of personal exploration of alternatives, perhaps by identifying rather uncritically with parents. A moratorium is actively engaged in exploring alternatives but is unable to make personal commitments. Finally, the identity diffused status refers to one who lacks personal commitments and appears disinterested in exploring alternatives.

Identity Status Continuum

In addition to the important task of validating the identity status constructs, several researchers have attempted to order the statuses along a developmental continuum. Research on this continuum has consistently grouped achievers with moratoriums and foreclosures with diffusions, suggesting that the former pair are more developmentally advanced (e.g. Marcia, 1967; Waterman & Waterman, 1974; Podd, 1972). However, studies of college females are mixed with

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respect to the ordering of moratoriums and foreclosures. Although some studies on females find a continuum order similar to males (e.g. Orlofsky, 1977), the majority of such studies (e.g. Marcia and Friedman, 1970; Toder and Marcia, 1971; Schenkel, 1972;1975) reveal similarities between foreclosures and achievers, suggesting that the foreclosed status may be more adaptive.

This finding seems to be related to the social milieu within which identity strivings occur. For example, in traditional, conservative settings, women may be rewarded more for conformity to a limited range of role expectations. The moratorium's intensive exploration of alternative roles and ideologies may result in negative feedback from significant others.

Furthermore, the age of the subject appears to make a difference. Studies using college junior and senior females generally reveal more alignment of foreclosures with achievers (e.g. Toder and Marcia, 1971; Schenkel, 1972.1975), whereas studies on high school females (e.g. Raphael, 1975) tend to group moratoriums with achievers. This has given rise to a distinction between early and late moratoriums. In other words, a moratorium appears to be a normative process during the high school/early college years. However, if it persists to the end of one's college experience, it may indicate a developmental fixation or inability to resolve identity conflicts of individuation vs. approval.

Subjects

In an attempt to isolate the social, developmental and gender variables that are relevant to the continuum debate this study uses 130 college junior and senior females in conservative college settings. Subjects were solicited be a general letter sent through campus mail to each eligible subject at two private conservative colleges. The private schools from which subjects were taken are both conservative Christian colleges. Although the students need not adhere to the particular denominational beliefs of these colleges, they are

expected to abide by a rather stringent code of personal conduct while on campus. Sixty-one percent of eligible subjects were used from one school and thirty-seven percent from the other. (The author was employed full-time at the school with the higher response rate.) There did not appear to be any significant differences in general pattern of responding between the two populations. However, the small response rates suggest caution be observed in generalizing from this sample. Indeed, those subjects who agreed to participate may be more conventional than their nonparticipant counterparts.

Procedure

Subjects were given a modified identity status interview (Marcia, 1964), and the tape-recorded interviews were rated independently by the author and two research assistants. Marcia's original interview assesses presence or absence of crisis and commitment in the areas of occupation, religion and politics. A fourth area, sex-role ideology was added based on Matteson's (1977) work with Danish youth. Overall percentage of agreement among judges on identity status assignment was 75 percent, a figure which compares favorably with other studies of this nature. Subjects also filled out questionnaires on social desirability response set (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964), self-esteem (Hovland and Janis, 1959; Coopersmith, 1967) and parent variables including acceptance, rejection, indulgence, conditional approval, nonenforcement of standards and acceptance of individuation (Schaefer and Bell, 1958).

Personality and parental variables were drawn from the theoretical formulations of Maslow's motivational need hierarchy, Coopersmith's antecedents of self-esteem and Marlowe and Crowne's approval motive. A brief rationale for the use of these variables follows. Maslow's (1970) theory of motivation includes the concept of self-actualization which is remarkably similar to Erikson's identity achievement construct. Therefore, needs such as acceptance and esteem

which Maslow considers to be prepotent to the need to self-actualize, may undergird identity achievement as well. Schaefer and Bell's (1958) parent variables of acceptance, rejection, conditional approval and acceptance of individuation appear to be good measures of some of these prepotent needs. Finally, Crowne and Marlowe (1964) consider their response set to be linked to the need for approval. However, in addition to its relevance to Maslow's need-hierarchy, the social desirability variable is potentially useful in assessing the veridical nature of subject responding. For a detailed account of the theoretical relevance of these works to the developmental antecedents of identity, see Van Wicklin (1981).

Results

A discriminant function analysis (Nie et al., 1975) was used to analyze the data. This particular computer program utilizes the Wilks method of analysis which selects in a stepwise manner the pattern of dependent variables that maximally discriminates among outcome groups (i.e. the ego identity statuses). Means and standard deviations for all variables are automatically provided by this analysis (see Table I), as well as univariate F ratios.

Table II presents univariate F ratios and significance levels for each dependent variable. For thirteen of fifteen variables, the F ratios are statistically significant. This implies that such variables as self-esteem, parental acceptance and rejection, acceptance of individuation and social desirability are useful in discriminating one identity status from another. The only two variables that fail to discriminate among identity statuses are maternal non-enforcement of standards and paternal indulgence.

Table III summarizes additional data pertaining to the discriminant analysis. Using what is known as a stepwise discriminant procedure, discriminative power was maximized after ten steps at which point eight variables re-

mained in the analysis. These variables are listed in the table. Wilks' lambda, an index of discriminatory power, can be seen to decline with the addition of each new variable. This indicates a progressive increase in discriminatory power with each step in the procedure. The final combination of eight variables is able to significantly discriminate each identity status from every other status. This pattern of variables also allows for successful, predictive classification of 73 of 130 into the appropriate identity status. Only 32.5 would be correctly classified by chance.

A discriminant analysis also provides information as to the number of dimensions or functions that are required to describe the outcome groups. With four groups, as in this study, the maximal number of dimensions along which the identity statuses could be differentiated is three (i.e. number of groups minus one). The three possible dimensions in this study would be achievers and foreclosures vs. moratoriums and diffusions, achievers and moratoriums vs. foreclosures and diffusions, and achievers and diffusions vs. moratoriums and foreclosures. The first two of these dimensions account for about 94 percent of the variance. The third factor (i.e. the one differentiating achievers and diffusions from moratoriums and foreclosures) is nonsignificant.

Table IV illustrates the differentiation of statuses on continua for both of the significant dimensions. It appears from Table IV that foreclosures and achievers are distinctly set apart from moratoriums and diffusions on the parental acceptance-rejection dimension and on self-esteem. In other words, foreclosures and achievers report much higher levels of parental acceptance and personal self-esteem and lower levels of parental rejection, than do moratoriums and diffusions.

However, the second discriminative function in Table IV demonstrates an alignment of achievers and moratoriums, especially on the social desirability variable. This means that foreclosures and diffusions score higher on social

desirability response set than moratoriums and achievers, who appear to respond more veridically.

Discussion

The results are illuminating. A major way in which foreclosed females do not resemble achievers is in socially desirable responding. This tendency for foreclosures to give socially desirable responses in situations of self-evaluation probably accounts in part for their alignment with achievers on variables such as esteem and parental acceptance. Presumably, if one could partial out the influence that social desirability has on foreclosures' responses, the alignment with achievers would diminish. To that end, the author performed a covariant analysis using the social desirability variable as the covariate in an analysis of identity status with self-esteem. The order of foreclosures (who initially scored the highest of all statuses) and achievers is actually reversed after the influence of the social desirability variable is partialled out. This suggests that report of self-esteem is elevated to an unrealistically high extent by the response set.

On the other hand, some of the alignment of foreclosures with achievers may be veridical for female adherents to the traditional sex-role. That is, foreclosed females may be highly accepted and esteemed by parents for conformity to a narrowly defined role, whereas the negative feedback from parents of moratoriums may result in the perception of parental rejection and conditional approval. Further research is needed to partial out the effects of socially desirable responding on report of parent variables. At present, one is not able to determine the extent to which subject report of parent variables is veridical, especially for foreclosures. The use of more direct data from parents and better control for socially desirable responding might help in this regard.

The fact that self-esteem associates with both significant discriminative functions probably indicates that the two measures of self-esteem are not homo-

genous. The observed correlation between the two measures of self-esteem is +.656. For the most part, it appears that the Janis-Field measure of self-esteem is the one that separates achievers and moratoriums from foreclosures and diffusions. Further study is necessary to single out the particular components of self-esteem that characterize one status grouping as opposed to another.

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Table I. Means and Standard Deviations - Social Desirability, Self-Esteem and Daughter's Report of Parent Variables

Variable		Achievers (n=35)	Moratoriums (n=23)	Foreclosures (n=44)	Diffusions (n=28)	Overall (n=130)
Social Desirability	Mean	12.77	11.43	15.02	14.39	13.64
	SD	5.29	5.63	4.03	5.49	5.13
Self-esteem I (Coopersmith)	Mean	18.89	14.04	19.23	13.32	16.95
	SD	4.47	5.44	4.33	5.67	5.52
Self-esteem II (Janis-Field)	Mean	71.37	63.65	70.84	57.18	66.77
	SD	10.04	10.62	13.57	13.90	13.45
Acceptance (Mother)	Mean	100.29	87.74	105.45	92.03	98.04
	SD	13.69	21.08	10.48	16.61	16.32
Rejection (Mother)	Mean	37.57	44.39	33.02	39.50	37.65
	SD	10.75	13.10	7.92	11.91	11.24
Acceptance of Individuation (Mother)	Mean	46.57	40.26	48.11	40.86	44.75
	SD	7.99	11.27	6.19	8.41	8.81
Conditional Approval (Mother)	Mean	40.86	44.61	36.32	44.32	40.73
	SD	10.98	12.76	9.21	12.39	11.49
Nonenforcement of Standards (Mother)	Mean	28.40	29.70	27.41	29.75	28.58
	SD	7.20	7.09	7.61	7.55	7.38
Indulgence (Mother)	Mean	45.63	44.48	42.64	49.11	45.16
	SD	8.71	9.32	6.94	11.71	9.23

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Table I. (continued)

Variable		Achievers (n=35)	Moratoriums (n=23)	Foreclosures (n=44)	Diffusions (n=28)	Overall (n=130)
Acceptance (Father)	Mean	95.00	77.00	101.14	79.21	90.49
	SD	18.58	27.74	15.13	16.69	21.47
Rejection (Father)	Mean	40.40	51.39	36.43	49.57	42.98
	SD	13.42	19.52	11.14	13.09	15.11
Acceptance of Individuation (Father)	Mean	45.34	37.91	48.14	37.00	43.18
	SD	10.60	11.93	7.76	8.67	10.61
Conditional Approval (Father)	Mean	38.37	44.43	35.75	44.46	39.87
	SD	14.58	16.02	10.24	13.11	13.62
Nonenforcement of Standards (Father)	Mean	31.00	32.17	25.77	30.96	29.43
	SD	9.15	9.32	6.55	8.39	8.54
Indulgence (Father)	Mean	38.66	38.96	41.20	41.93	40.28
	SD	9.52	9.27	8.57	11.68	9.67

Description of Scales: (for all scales, high score means high standing on variable)

SD scale: 33 items, score range of 0 - 33.
SE I: 25 items, score range of 0 - 25.
SE II: 20 items (5 choice), score range of 20 - 100.

Parent variables (all items have four choices)
Acceptance: 30 items, score range of 30 - 120
Rejection: 25 items, score range of 25 - 100
Acceptance of Individuation: 20 items, score range of 20 - 80
Conditional Approval: 25 items, score range of 25 - 100
Nonenforcement of standards: 15 items, score range of 15 - 60
Indulgence: 20 items, score range of 20 - 80

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Table II. Univariate F ratios on all dependent variables with 3 and 126 df

Variable	F	Significance Level
Social desirability	3.167	.007
*Self-esteem I (Coopersmith)	12.880	.000
Self-esteem II (Janis-Field)	9.407	.000
Acceptance (Mother)	8.966	.000
Rejection (Mother)	6.150	.001
Acceptance of Individuation (Mother)	7.407	.000
Conditional Approval (Mother)	4.244	.007
Nonenforcement of Standards (Mother)	0.782	.506 (nonsignificant)
Indulgence (Mother)	3.007	.033
Acceptance (Father)	12.260	.000
Rejection (Father)	8.519	.000
Acceptance of Individuation (Father)	10.720	.000
Conditional Approval (Father)	3.615	.015
Nonenforcement of Standards (Father)	4.514	.005
Indulgence (Father)	0.875	.456 (nonsignificant)

* The correlation observed between the two measures of self-esteem in this study was .656

Table III. Overall Stepwise Discriminant Analysis

Success maximized at 10 steps
F - 4.189 df - 24,345 p < .00001
Hit rate - 56.15%; 73 correct of 130 cases

Actual group	no. of cases	predicted group membership Ach	Mor	For	Dif
Achiever	35	18	6	9	2
Moratorium	23	4	9	6	4
Foreclosure	44	11	2	28	3
Diffusion	28	4	4	2	18

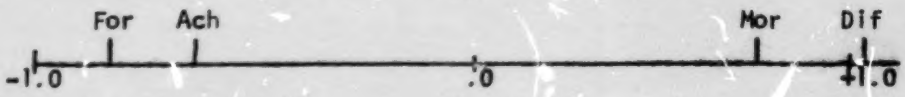
Major predictors

Variable	Wilks' lambda
Self-esteem I (Coopersmith)	.765
Acceptance (Father)	.674
Nonenforcement of standards (Father)	.619
Social Desirability Response Set	.572
Self-esteem II (Janis-Field)	.534
Indulgence (Mother)	.515
Rejection (Mother)	.483
Acceptance (Mother)	.469

(All eight variables are significant at p values less than .0001)

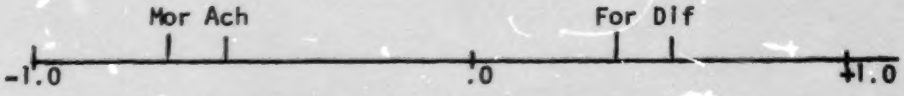
Table IV The location of Identity Statuses on the Two Significant Functions

Function 1



Major discriminating variables	Canonical Discriminant Functions	
Acceptance (Mother)	Foreclosure	-0.75571
Acceptance (Father)	Achiever	-0.41683
Rejection (Mother)	Moratorium	+0.76806
Self-Esteem I (Coopersmith)	Diffusion	+1.07767
Self-Esteem II (Janis-Field)		

Function 2



Major discriminating variables	Canonical Discriminant Functions	
Social Desirability Response Set	Moratorium	-0.64394
Rejection (Mother)	Achiever	-0.43950
Self-Esteem II (Janis-Field)	Foreclosure	+0.34183
Nonenforcement of Standards (Father)	Diffusion	+0.54117